



American Resource Center Newsletter U.S. Embassy Helsinki February 2014, Issue 2

Congratulations to Panu Kontkanen, ARC Grant 2013 Winner!

The ARC Grant jury, consisting of Executive Director Terhi Mölsä from the Fulbright Center, Public Affairs Officer Jeff Reneau, and Assistant Public Affairs Officer Amy Hirsch, unanimously decided to give the ARC Grant 2013 to Panu Kontkanen, a student at Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture. Mr. Kontkanen is enrolled in Master's Degree Programme in Spatial Design, and his Master's Thesis is titled *From Sweat Lodge to Sauna*.



APPLY NOW

for the American Resource Center Grant!

Are you writing your Master's Thesis about the U.S.A? The best application is rewarded with a 1,000 € grant. For more information please contact the ARC on the 2nd floor.

http://finland.usembassy.gov/arc_grant.html

In his application Kontkanen writes: "Nature has always been very close to my heart. Since starting the Master's thesis process it has been very clear to me that with the thesis work I also want to take a strong stand for sustainability and ecological way of living.

From *Sweat Lodge to Sauna* studies and compares the Lakota sweat lodge traditions to the Finnish sauna culture and it is aiming for 21st century interpretation of the Lakota sweat lodge that for example the hikers can use as a portable sauna. The design practice of the thesis relies strongly on ecological design phenomena that are also deriving from the philosophy of indigenous

cultures, such as permaculture and resilience."

The ARC Grant was awarded for the 8th time this year. The scholarship program was started in 2006 to celebrate the ARC's 60th birthday and has continued annually as a way to recognize talented Master's level students whose work concentrates on some aspect of the United States. This year we received 13 applications altogether for the ARC Grant and were delighted to see the high level of study on the U.S. being conducted in Finland in such a broad range of Finnish universities. Best of luck in their studies to all of our applicants!

February is African American History Month

National African American History Month in February celebrates the contributions that African Americans have made to American history in their struggles for freedom and equality and deepens our understanding of our Nation's history.

National African American History Month had its origins in 1915 when historian and author Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. This organization is now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History ("ASALH"). Through this organization Dr. Woodson initiated the first Negro History Week in February 1926.

Dr Woodson selected the week in February that included the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two key figures in the history of African Americans.

Read more at <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/african-american.php> and <http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/index.html>

Photo: Civil rights march on Washington, D.C.
(Photo courtesy of Library of Congress)

Did You See Already?

American author Scott Turow visited Helsinki, Finland on January 30-31, 2014. He met with Amy Hirsch of the U.S. Embassy to talk about his new book and career.



The ARC proudly presents a Youtube video of his interview (5:13): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2Bu_OsdbUQ

"The people who can read carefully and write carefully truly do rule the world. The ability to use language well is the source of power."

- Scott Turow

WebPicks

collected by the ARC staff

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American Life

10 facts About Americans and Public Libraries by Lee Rainie. Pew Research Center, January 24, 2014.

Technology and the internet are changing Americans' reading habits and also their relationship with libraries. Half of Americans now own a tablet or e-reader and libraries have responded by expanding their digital offerings. But what hasn't changed is Americans' love for books. American adults still read about as much as ever and overwhelmingly say libraries play an important role in their communities.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/24/10-facts-about-americans-and-public-libraries/>

Bigger Than Phil by Adam Gopnik. The New Yorker, February 17, 2014

When did faith start to fade? "Relatively peaceful and prosperous societies, we can establish, tend to have a declining belief in a deity. But did we first give up on God and so become calm and rich? Or did we become calm and rich, and so give up on God?"

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2014/02/17/140217crat_atlarge_gopnik?currentPage=all

The Heckman Equation: Early Childhood Education Benefits All by Brendan Greeley. Bloomberg BusinessWeek, January 16, 2014.

The Nobel economist's unsentimental pitch for spending tax dollars on early education. "The argument is not just an appeal to the poor. We're saving money for everyone".

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-01-16/the-heckman-equation-early-childhood-education-benefits-all>

The History of How We Came to Revere Abraham Lincoln by Joshua Zeitz. Smithsonian, February 2014.

The slain president's two personal secretaries battled mudslingers for a quarter-century to shape his image

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/history-how-we-came-to-revere-abraham-lincoln-180949447/#ixzz2t1Vcsc8c>

The Outlaw by Peter Schjeldahl. The New Yorker, February 3, 2014.

The extraordinary life of William S. Burroughs.

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2014/02/03/140203crbo_books_schjeldahl

The 'Tiger Mom' Superiority Complex by Suketu Mehta. Time, February 3, 2014.

A new book from Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld seeks to explain why some groups succeed in America, and some fail. But when does cultural pride cross over into racism?

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2163555-1,00.html>

Economy & Politics

The Bitcoin-Mining Arms Race Heats Up by Ashlee Vance and Brad Stone. Bloomberg BusinessWeek, January 9, 2014.

Why are investors so crazy for an alternative currency invented by a phantom?

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-01-09/bitcoin-mining-chips-gear-computing-groups-competition-heats-up>

Going the Distance by David Remnick. The New Yorker, January 27, 2014

On and off the road with Barack Obama. "Obama's Presidency is on the clock. Hard as it has been to pass legislation, the coming year is a marker, the final interval before the fight for succession becomes politically all-consuming." A 22-page profile of President Obama.

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2014/01/27/140127fa_fact_remnick?currentPage=all

How Boulder Became America's Startup Capital by Burt Helm. Inc. Magazine, January/February 2014.

An unlikely story of tree-huggers, commies, eggheads, and gold.

<http://www.inc.com/magazine/201312/boulder-colorado-fast-growing-business.html>

How the Scots Invented 'Liberalism' by Daniel B. Klein. The Atlantic, February, 13 2014.

When Adam Smith and friends began using the term in a political sense, they were referring to free markets in labor and goods—a far cry from the way it's often used today.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/02/how-the-scots-invented-liberalism/283780/>

TIME Newsmaker Interview With Vice President Joe Biden by Zeke J. Miller. Time, February 10, 2014.

Joe Biden Talks to TIME About Marijuana, Obamacare and the Second Term.

<http://swampland.time.com/2014/02/10/joe-biden-interview-2016-presidential-campaign/?iid=sl-main-belt>

Global Challenges

Almost Famous by Alexis Sobel Fitts. Columbia Journalism Review, January 2, 2014.

Can a star-studded documentary series make people care about climate change?

http://www.cjr.org/feature/almost_famous.php

Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). January 30, 2014.

Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, human influence on the climate system is clear, and limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions, finds the Climate Change 2013 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

<http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/#.Uu87c7TbxMZ>

Google's Road Map to Global Domination by Adam Fisher. The New York Times Magazine, December 11, 2013.

Google's plan for global domination depends on being the first to map every last road, river and storefront on the actual globe. It's as hard as it sounds.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/15/magazine/googles-plan-for-global-domination-dont-ask-why-ask-where.html?_r=0

Media Darling by Shahan Mufti. Columbia Journalism Review, January 2, 2014.

Malala Yousafzai's long and delicate dance with the press.

http://www.cjr.org/feature/media_darling.php

One Stat to Destroy Your Faith in Humanity: The World's 85 Richest People Own as Much as the 3.5 Billion Poorest by David Stout. Time, January 20, 2014.

The world's 85 richest individuals now own as much as the poorest half of the 7 billion global population, according to a report released by Oxfam.

<http://business.time.com/2014/01/20/worlds-85-wealthiest-people-as-rich-as-3-5-billion-poorest/#ixzz2sKh4NBbE>

Severe Drought Has U.S. West Fearing Worst by Adam Nagourney and Ian Lovett. The New York Times, February 1, 2014.

The punishing drought that has swept California is now threatening the state's drinking water supply.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/02/us/severe-drought-has-us-west-fearing-worst.html?_r=0

International Relations

In Defense of Kissinger by Robert D. Blackwill. The National Interest, January 2, 2014.

In his book "Diplomacy", Henry Kissinger concludes that the United States "faces the challenge of reaching its goals in stages, each of which is an amalgam of American values and geopolitical necessities."

<http://nationalinterest.org/article/defense-kissinger-9642>

The Moment of Creation by Gershom Gorenberg. The American Prospect, February 5, 2014.

Do America's current challenges in the Middle East trace back to Harry Truman's 1948 missteps?

<http://prospect.org/article/moment-creation>

Obama's Liberal Imperialism by David Rieff. The National Interest, February 11, 2014.

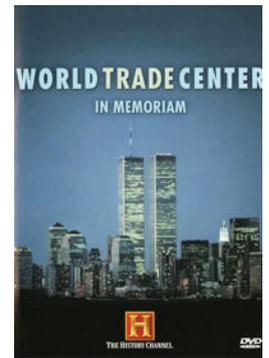
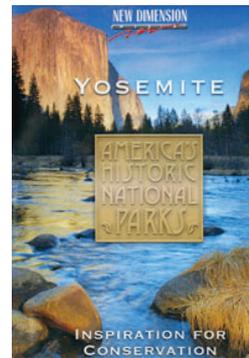
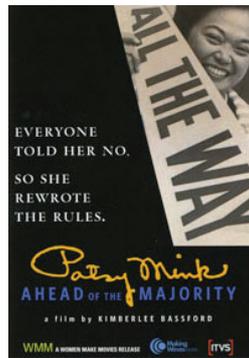
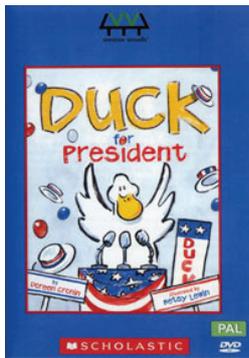
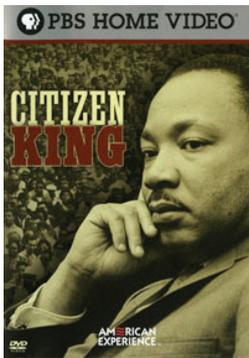
To accuse President Obama of being exceptional in his refusal to embrace American exceptionalism has been a perennial staple of discourse among hawkish conservatives intent on proving that he has a proclivity for going AWOL when it comes to national security.

<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/obamas-liberal-imperialism-9861>

American Resource Center's DVD Collection

Do you need audiovisuals to boost your message? Want to liven up your presentation with video clips? The American Resource Center's DVD collection has been updated with many new programs about the United States. Available free for educational and home use, many of the programs have been produced by production houses such as the History Channel, PBS, or HBO. The collection includes programs on politics & government, history & society, travel, education, visual arts, communications & information, music, theater, and architecture & design, as well as children's programs.

The updated DVD catalog is available on our website at <http://finland.usembassy.gov/video-collection.html>. Happy watching!



Did You Know?

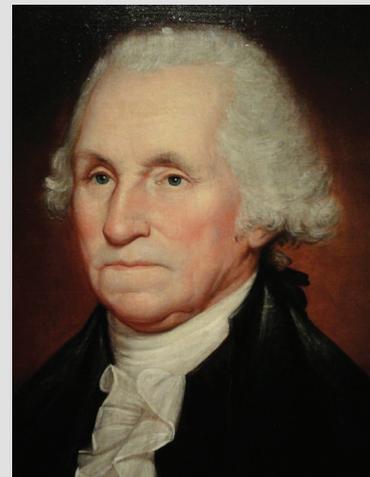
George Washington's Birthday is celebrated as a federal holiday on the third Monday in February. It is one of eleven permanent holidays established by Congress.

But did you know that while his birthday is observed this year on February 17th, he wasn't really born then?

George Washington was born in Virginia on February 11, 1731, according to the then-used Julian calendar. In 1752, however, Britain and all its colonies adopted the Gregorian calendar which moved Washington's birthday a year and 11 days to February 22, 1732.

Read more at

<http://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/washington/>



Painting by Daderot (Own work) [CC0], via Wikimedia Commons



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